

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 165

CS 004 873

AUTHOR Hofler, Donald B.
TITLE Will the Real Homonym Please Stand Up? A Question of Classification.
PUB DATE Mar 79
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (7th, Baltimore, Maryland, March 8-10, 1979)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classification; *Linguistics; Semantics; *Structural Analysis; *Word Study Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Homonyms

ABSTRACT

Stating that teachers are often confused by the terms "homonym" and "homophone," this paper maintains that the difficulty can be eased by determining how words can be classified in terms of structure, meaning, or sound. It then presents a word nomenclature model that draws upon the differentiation between these groups of words and treats not only homonyms and homophones but also other classes of words such as acronyms, paronyms, and heteronyms. The paper concludes that the model could aid the teacher in dealing with apparent contradictions in basals and in some dictionaries.

(Author)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Donald B. Hofler

Will the Real Homonym Please Stand Up?

A Question of Classification

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Donald B. Hofler

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT
OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED172168

The great homonym-homophone controversy has begun. Older basals and some new ones, as well as college textbooks, treat words such as soul and sole as homonyms. More recent texts and professional journals refer to them as homophones. However, various dictionaries have always listed definitions for both which may have caused some misinterpretation, but when viewed from a point of classification the definitions are more readily understandable. In the Random House Dictionary we find the following citations:

homonym n. 1. a word like another in sound and spelling but different in meaning, a chase, to pursue, and chase, to ornament metal 2. a

homophone 3. a homograph

homophone n. 1. phonet. a word pronounced the same as, but differing in meaning from another, whether spelled the same way or not, as heir and air. (back fromation from homophonous)

CS004873

If we consider that each word has three possible classifications, the definitions begins to clarify. When dealing with words we must consider their graphic representations or structure, their meaning, and their sound. We can discuss the classification of words within their contextual use. Words can change their classification, or occur simulataneous in more than one category or solely in one category.

Hot is not an antonym until discussed in relationship to cold;

lead /led/ is not a heteronym until related to lead /lēd/ laser is solely an acronym. Any given word may be considered in various classes, therefore confusion can occur. An example would be row. If row (Row your boat.) is compared to row (In the front row), they are homonyms as well as homphones and homographs. However, if row (Row your boat) is compared to roe (I like roe.) they are homophones but not homonyms or homographs. If row (Row your boat.) is compared to row (They had a row at the party.) they are heteronyms as well as homographs but not homophones. Therefore, situations can occur in which homonyms are homophones and homographs (see definition) but homophones (row-ro) are not homonyms or homographs. In reviewing our definitions we see why the two terms are not interchangeable as one can readily observe due to the various possible contextual

situations.

In attempting to clarify these relationships, this writer has devised a classification system or word nomenclature system to provide an operational basis for a number of popularly used terms in the teaching of vocabulary. This may help teachers organize more effectively such activities that use the various terminologies included.

Word Nomenclature

I. Structure

A. Acronyms (acro - Gk. extremity + onym Gk. word)

1. Words formed from initial letters or groups of letters of words
2. WAC - Woman's Army Corps, Smog-smoke, fog

B. Abbreviations (ad - L. to + brevi L. short)

1. Shorten a word or phrase by omitting letters
 - a. NW - northwest
 - b. Can't - can not
2. Substituting shorter forms of different word origin
 - a. Xn - Christian, Xmas - Christmas
 - b. Lb. - pound (L. libra)

C. Homographs (homo - Gk. same + graph Gk. write)

1. Words same in written form but differ in meaning and origin
2. Fair - beautiful fair - market

D. Palindromes (palin - Gk. back + drome - Gk. running)

1. Words, line, or verse reading the same backwards as forwards
2. Radar, pop, kayak
3. Madam I'm Adam

II. Meaning

A. Synonyms (syn - Gk. with + onym Gk. word)

1. Words having the same or nearly the same meaning
2. Huge - large

B. Antonyms (anti - Gk. opposity of + onym Gk. word)

1. Words opposite in meaning
2. Tall - short

C. Homonyms (homo - Gk. same + onym Gk. word)

1. Words alike in sound and spelling but different in meaning
2. Pool of water - pool the game

D. Paronyms (par - Gk. modification + Onym - Gk. word)

1. Words containing the same root or stem

2. Wise - wisdom

E. Eponym (epi - Gk. after + onym - Gk. - word)

1. Place name, object or concept named after a real or imaginary person

2. Spoonerism - Rev. Spooner, Rome - Romulus

F. Metonym (met - Gk. change + onym - Gk. word)

1. Name changing - substituting an attribute or associated thing for the usual name of a thing

2. The blud = sky, the Crown = king

III. Sound

A. Homophone (home - Gk. same + phon Gk. sound)

1. A word pronounced the same as but different in meaning from another, whether, whether spelled the same way or not

2. To, two, too - ewe, you, yew

B. Heteronyms (hetero - Gk. different + onym Gk. word)

1. Words having different sound and meaning but the same spelling

2. Lead - /lēd/ lead/led/

The definitions cited above were not devised by the riter, but taken directly from the sources cited. If teachers are interested in motivating students for the study of many of these terms, try The Guinness Book of World Records, you will find the record homophone (sole, soul, soal, soul, sowle, sol) not homonym, longest palindrome, longest abbreviation, greatest eponym and the word that has the greatest number of meanings. Can you guess which homonym will stand up when the count is taken?

Directionary of Linguistics, Philosophical Library, N.Y., 1954.

The Guinness Book of World Records, Bantam Book, N.Y., 1976.

Modern English-A Glossary of Literature and Language, Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, (unabridged ed)
Random House, 1967.

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, G. & C. Merriam Co., 1969.